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Response to FOCAL Policy Paper FPP-03-05 titled 'Redefining Hemispheric Security After September 11th' by Juan Pablo-Soriano and Donald R. MacKay

Montreal, April 30, 2003

I would first like to congratulate you on your recent choice of topic for one of your policy papers. It is high time that we take note of the consequences of September 11th and its effects on the security dialogue in the Americas. It is also important to analyze the defining events involving the security dialogue such as the perspectives for the OAS Ministerial meeting tentatively planned for the month of May and the role of the OAS and various other hemispheric military and security bodies. The prudent and cautious nature of your analysis and conclusions remind me of my former days at the Foreign Ministry. The extremely nuanced nature of your paper detracts from an analytical perspective that needs to be more sharply critical of the pretensions to hegemony of one state in the hemisphere. The danger is real and it can be traced back from 911. As intellectuals, we have a social responsibility to speak clearly in favor of the respect of international law.

For example, the new pre-occupation with security following 911 and the US position of not including poverty reduction, environment, health etc is well analyzed. However this is not new. American aid has always contained a strong element of political and military assistance. During the Soviet Afghan war, US aid was almost exclusively used for a military build up resulting in the transformation of neighboring Pakistan into an armed camp. The US record in Central America is not better with their support of armed insurgency (contras and others) sometimes against legally elected governments. The trend in Latin American states towards political pluralism is not the result of American aid or influence. Moreover this transition is not yet complete and US allies in the region continue to rule as oligarchies and those governments that have made efforts to democratize may find themselves yet again the target of pre-emptive strikes or civil unrest fomented by American military and economic interests. Yet it is not only a question of interests. It is a question of empire building on a global scale.

Why else would the OAS just eight days after 911 decide to agree unanimously that attacks against the United States were an attack directed against the whole continent. Clearly this is not true. Contrary to Ambassador Paul Celluci's remarks given in an

interview with a Canadian magazine L'Actualité¹, the Ambassador is wrong when he pleads that the US is not an imperialistic power like the French and the British of yesteryear. A cursory look at US armed intervention in the Americas tells us a quite different story. The history of the United Fruit Company in Latin America should be enough to convince anyone and needs no further discussion.

Pre-emption is not a new doctrine since its origins can be traced back to the Munroe doctrine of Manifest Destiny in 1822 when President Munroe warned European powers to keep out of the Western hemisphere thereby staking out US claims to geographical hegemony. Since the conception of this doctrine, US foreign policy in the Americas has been developed with shameless disregard for the peoples and minorities of the Americas. Why should we be shocked by the Iraqi adventure or that the OAS has cowered in fear of being considered one of the 'not for the USA' as President George Bush refers to it. What is morally reprehensible is that hemispheric peace and security is now being dictated to everyone from the high priests in the White House and Pentagon. The new military and bureaucratic junta in Washington is a curious mixture of disciples of the philosopher Leo Strauss and a collection of Christian evangelists. This volatile ideological mixture is a recipe for the renewed vigor of the doctrine of pre-emption under the veil of homeland security.² It is clear that the US does not seek real debate or discussion of security issues with its neighbors in the Americas. We, like the Iraqis, are to be sacrificed at the altar of 911, an event for which we are not responsible but which has engendered a dangerous amount of resentment and thirst for vengeance amongst the American people. You correctly point out that the USA supports regional security groupings such as the Inter-American Defense Board and the Inter-American Defense College. These bodies are easier to control than the unwieldy OAS whose future may well resemble that of the UN in case of new crises. There is no reason to believe that the Americans will respect international law by consulting with the OAS. Moreover the OAS may be used to break the UN if the US can succeed in winning it over relative to any pre-emptive coup or strike in the region. Emasculating the power of the UN is a strategic American goal and if the OAS can be used in that effort, so be it. The US craves sycophantic countries like the UK and flees international bodies that may call into question their foreign policy and the doctrine of pre-emption.

Let us now turn to your section on 'Agreements' (page 9). In this section, you enumerate some of the common aims of member states in the lead up to the Mexico meeting of 2003. The first sign of agreement is the felt need to renovate the current inter-American security system, a system whose foundation dates back to the Second World War. A fair

¹ L'Actualite, 'L'Aigle en colère', number , April, 2003.

² In Le Monde of April 16, 2003, there appears an article analyzing the political philosophy of 'The President's Men' written by Alain Frachon and Daniel Vernet. The Straussian equation for supporting the doctrine of pre-emption is therein discussed – "La nature des régimes politiques est beaucoup plus importante que toutes les institutions et arrangements internationaux pour le maintien de la paix dans le monde. La plus grande menace provient des Etats qui ne partagent pas les valeurs (américaines) de la démocratie. Changer ces regimes et faire progresser les valeurs démocratiques constitue le meilleur moyen de renforcer la sécurité (des Etas-Unis) et la paix". Another article in La Presse of April 26, 2003 written by André Noel analyzes especially the influence of the Christian right on the US executive branch of government.

enough point but one has to ask oneself the reason why it has remained static. One possible explanation is that the lack of a collective and inclusive security dialogue coincided with US regional political and economic interests. The pre-emptive doctrine usually based on flimsy claims of 'creeping communism' was then able to flourish. Chile, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, Grenada etc. After 911, the US is seeking to bind states into a rigid and extremely limited definition of regional security that strips away developmental aspects that are so important in the Americas. Is this a prelude to tacit or collective support for the doctrine of pre-emption under the veil of a forced consensus, a consensus built on the 'for or against' formula? Any agreement on the hemispheric security front must contain a US promise to ditch its doctrine of pre-emption that it has perfected in the Americas over the past almost 200 years. If not, the upcoming 'dialogue' may be a new ideological justification for US adventures in the hemisphere.

Is there a high level of inter-state trust in the Americas? If one looks at the historical facts of the 20th century in the Americas, border disputes come in dead last in terms of importance as factors of stability when analyzed against the multiple 'coups de force' authored by our southern neighbor. The new emphasis on security since 911 remains a question mark and given the history of the Americas and the recent debacles at the UN, states in the Americas have reason to be concerned by the political and economic fallout. Some states are willing to buck the trend and defend international law despite threats of economic or political prejudice. Some of these states are located in the Americas like Canada, Mexico and Chile.

Will the USA pledge to abide by consensus obtained from the OAS? No matter what the decision may be? Will America open the security dialogue to include Cuba? Recent events at the UN may provide us with an answer.

Oliver Todd in his book *Après Empire*³ underscores the thesis that all empires rise and fall and that this is the destiny of the American empire spreading itself so thinly around the world in the name of its most vital economic and political interests. We all have a stake in that not happening but given the vitality of the self-destructive forces presently at work in the homeland, time may be running out for everyone. Like the kings of past centuries, when war is waged, the people and their representatives are required to pay a heavy tribute and pay with their blood. The new Iraqi adventure is plunging the richest country in the world into a deluge of deficit spending and international borrowing. The constant use of reservists to increase nationalist sentiment amongst the poorer sections of the American people will deliver another blow to the US economy as it deprives itself from precious human capital in the world knowledge-based economy.

For Canada the loss of US power may be too great to contemplate. It may also be an opportunity. Although in the first days after 911, the event was being considered as a tragedy, it is now clear that right wing elements of the US government have seized it as a historic opportunity to justify abrogating international law. And the Americas will not be immune to this important development.

³ Todd, Oliver, *Après Empire*, Gallimard nrf, 2002.

One of the great political successes in the Americas has been enhanced inclusiveness and there is a much better opportunity to improve human rights in Cuba by including that nation in the upcoming security dialogue. It improves external leverage and internal democratization over time. Isolating Cuba should not be an option in the upcoming security dialogue and its inclusion would send a message regarding the respect of international law in the Americas in the name of which our family of nations can progress and prosper.

The countries of the Americas were not responsible for 911. We did not seek to unseat governments using pre-emptive strikes against the advice and will of the UN Security Council. We did not arm the Islamic extremists with aid money during the Soviet Afghan war. Nor did we obstruct UN resolutions designed to bring peace to Palestine and the Middle East region. We did not arm Israel with sophisticated weapons that are now being used to defeat the Palestinian people.

It is for these reasons that the hemispheric security 'dialogue' rings hollow. As a country, Canada should participate under the following conditions:

1. A pledge from the USA that no pre-emptive strikes will take place against member states of the Americas and that the doctrine of pre-emption itself is illegitimate in the Americas. This is a confidence building measure aimed at protecting smaller states and encouraging many new democracies to develop their economies rather than increase military spending.
2. Cuba must be a full partner in the upcoming dialogue. Their participation could be acceptable if the Cuban government gives strong guarantees regarding human rights and submits a plan for their steady improvement.
3. That the OAS be strengthened as the only viable regional multi-lateral vehicle in the Americas to discuss hemispheric security and that member states will abide by their decisions. The OAS can and should refer some key matters to the UN to obtain a larger consensus for its decisions.

According to Oliver Todd, the United States is becoming a problem for the world⁴. We, in the Americas, have been dealing with this problem for nearly the last 200 years.

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⁴ Après Empire, p.9.